

# Hepatitis B

## Quick Facts



## What is Hepatitis B ?

Hepatitis B is an infectious liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus. Hepatitis B is spread through contact with blood, semen, and other body fluids from a person living with hepatitis B. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that as many as 1.17 million people in the United States are living with hepatitis B.

For some people, hepatitis B is a short-term illness. For others, it can become a long-term, chronic infection that can result in serious, even life-threatening health problems like cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer. Age is a contributing factor in whether hepatitis B becomes chronic — the younger a person is, the more likely they are to develop a chronic hepatitis B infection. In 2020 there were 2,157 acute cases of hepatitis B reported to CDC; however, since many people are not tested, the actual number of acute cases of hepatitis B in 2020 is estimated to be around 14,000.

The best way to prevent hepatitis B is through vaccination. CDC recommends that all adults be screened for hepatitis b at least once in their lifetime, and that adults aged 18 to 59 receive the hepatitis b vaccine. For those living with chronic hepatitis B, there are several antiviral treatments available that can delay or reverse the effects of liver disease.

## Should I get tested?

The CDC recommends that everyone 18 years of age and older be tested for hepatitis B at least once in your lifetime. It is also recommended to get tested if you are pregnant during each pregnancy, and to get periodic testing if at risk of exposure.

## What are the Symptoms of Hepatitis B?

Most people do not experience symptoms when newly infected with hepatitis B. If symptoms occur, they typically begin around 90 days after exposure, but can appear anytime from eight weeks to five months after exposure, and can last anywhere from several weeks to six months.



ABDOMINAL PAIN



FEVER



DARK URINE



JOINT PAIN



DIARRHEA



FATIGUE  
(EXTREME TIREDNESS)



NAUSEA



VOMITING



JAUNDICE  
(YELLOWING OF  
THE EYES)



PALE STOOLS  
(POOP)



LOSS OF APPETITE

## How is Hepatitis B spread?

- Mother-to-child during pregnancy or delivery.
- Sexual contact with person with hepatitis B.
- Sharing contaminated equipment used to inject drugs (e.g. needles, syringes, drug preparation equipment).
- Exposure to needle sticks or sharp instruments through poor infection control practices in healthcare setting (e.g. dialysis units, diabetes clinics).
- Sharing contaminated items that can break the skin or mucous membranes (e.g. razors, toothbrushes, medical equipment)

## Who is at risk for Hepatitis B?

- People born in countries where hepatitis B is common.
- People born in the U.S. who were not vaccinated as infants and whose parents were born in countries where hepatitis B is common.
- People who now or have ever injected drugs.
- People who are now or have ever been incarcerated.
- People living with HIV, hepatitis C, or sexually transmitted infections.
- Household and sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B.
- Men who have sex with men.
- People on dialysis.

## How can Hepatitis B be prevented?

- Get the hepatitis B vaccine.
- Avoid sharing needles, syringes, and other equipment used to inject drugs.
- Avoid sharing household items like toothbrushes or razors.
- Practice safe sex, and use condoms.
- Use licensed tattoo and piercing studios.

**Hepatitis B vaccine provides 98 to 100% protection against hepatitis B virus.**

## How do I know if I have Hepatitis B?

Getting tested for hepatitis B can help a provider determine if you have a current acute or chronic infection, are immune to hepatitis B, or have recovered from a past infection. There are multiple hepatitis B tests available. It is recommended that you follow up with your provider for interpretation of your results.

## How can Hepatitis B be treated?

People with hepatitis B should be under the care of a healthcare provider, and get vaccinated for hepatitis A, tested for hepatitis C, avoid drinking alcohol, follow a healthy diet, and discuss all medications with a healthcare professional before taking them. Additional treatment varies based on if someone has acute or chronic hepatitis B.

- Acute hepatitis B is treated with supportive care.
- Chronic hepatitis B has several medications that can be prescribed to decrease decompensation of the liver. Not everyone with chronic hepatitis b needs medication.

**For additional information on hepatitis B visit:**

[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hbv/index.htm)

